

# Ashmead (A. S.)

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## Migration of Syphilis from East Asia into America by Way of the Behring Sea.

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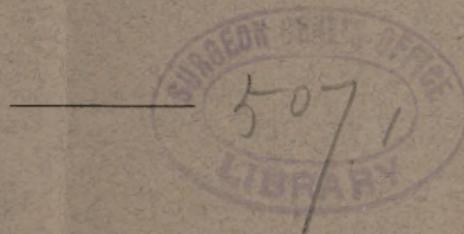
BY ALBERT S. ASHMEAD, M.D.

NEW YORK.

LATE FOREIGN MEDICAL DIRECTOR TOKIO HOSPITAL, TOKIO, JAPAN.

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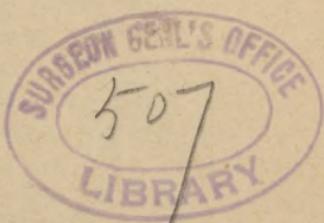
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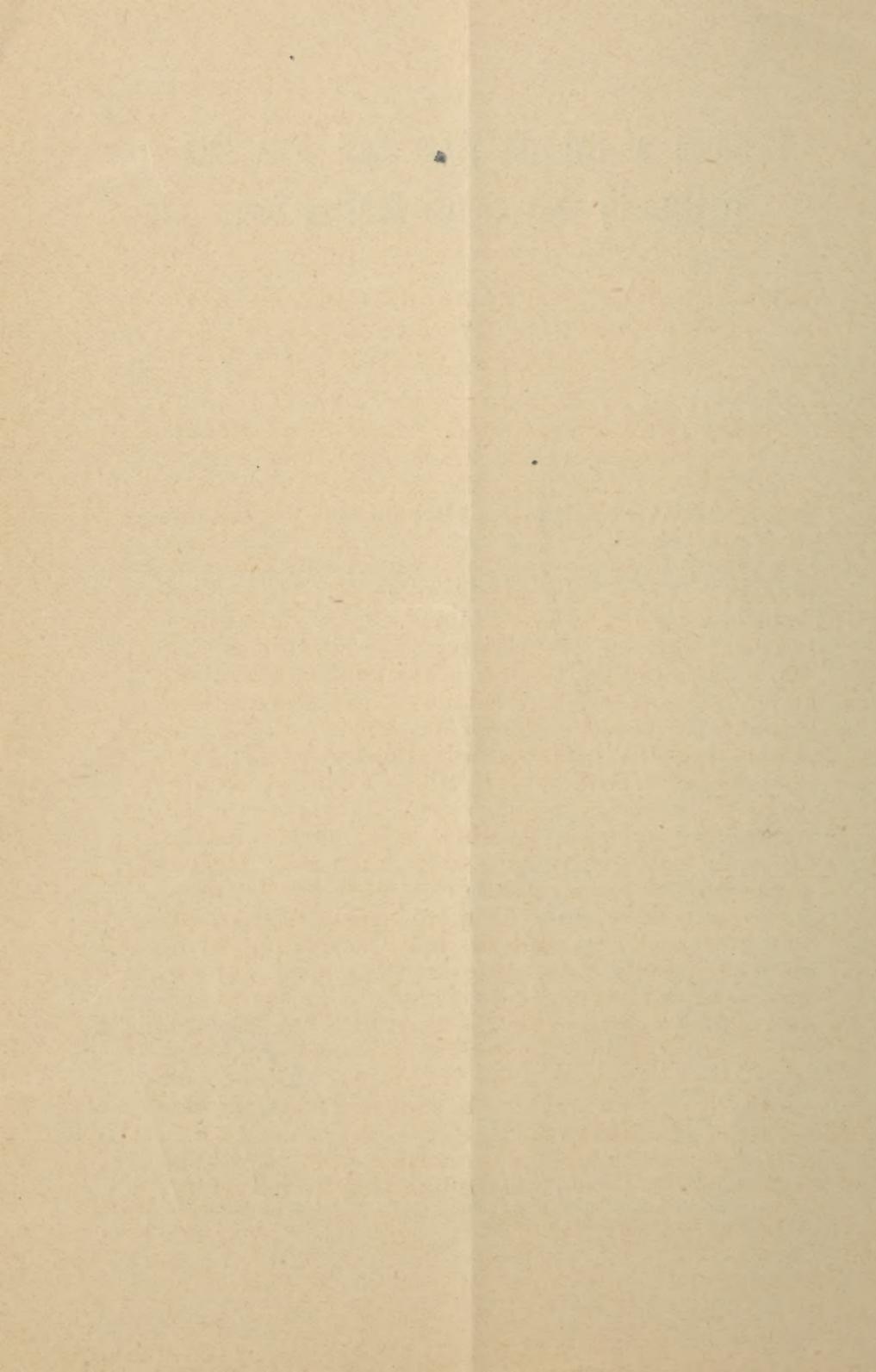
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In the October issue of the *Sei-I-Kwai Medical Journal* re-appear two articles of mine, both on pre-Columbian syphilis, in which I endeavor to show a possible relation between East Asia and pre-Columbian America.

The antiquity of syphilis in Japan and China is admitted by all Japanese students. Waké and Tamba, who both belong as far back as the seventh century, mention this disease. The authors of the *Dai-do-rui-shiu-ho*<sup>1</sup> refer to a medicine used against it by Sukunahiko, the Esculapius of Japan, who lived in the time of Jimmu Tennō (660 B. C.) In China, syphilis was certainly known in the Chu dynasty 1122 B. C. to 314 B. C. From China the disease is supposed to have come to Japan, in the migratory way, landing first at some harbor in the Hijen district, it may have been Nagasaki. Hence, the newcomer spread in all directions over Japan.

China itself seems to have imported syphilis from the south, as it has received smallpox from the north. Both these facts are affirmed by very hoary authorities; they call syphilis the demon of the south, and smallpox the demon of the north. They have no doubt but that the first of these monsters originated in heat and moisture, the southern elements, and that the other was born from cold and frost, the elements of the north.

If I observe here that smallpox penetrated first into northern Japan, being introduced from Tartary,

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<sup>1</sup> A work composed 806-809 A. D.

the reader, remembering what I said before, that syphilis first settled in Hijen, will be struck by the fact that the same thing happened here as in China: syphilis from the south, smallpox from the north. We may presume, therefore, that there was some reason for the belief of these ancient writers, that syphilis arose in heat and moisture, and smallpox in cold and frost; besides, it is but fair to consider that these writers were 3,000 years nearer to the origin of both plagues than we are.

Let us see whether the same manner of introduction which we have found in China and Japan, is also that of American syphilis.

Syphilis is admitted by Prof. Brinton to have existed in America when Columbus landed. Yet this author will not see any connection between ancient Americans and East Asiatics; in fact, he denies it positively. He is inclined to think that the disease existed independently in America and in Europe, and that Columbus, therefore, could not have introduced it from Europe to America. Now, if syphilis existed in America, that is the now Spanish America, before the arrival of Columbus, it either originated in the south, in moisture and heat, to speak with the Chinese, for nowhere but in the south have we any evidence of its presence, or it was brought over, say from China or Japan. This happened, if at all, by way of migration, for commerce there was none. We hear, indeed, of a drifting of Chinese junks to ancient Peru and Ecuador; of course, this may be only a myth. But the fact that the Aztecs of Mexico, and the Incas of Peru, the most ancient American races, came from the north, is not mythical. If they came from the north, say from the Behring Sea, it is reasonable to believe that they crossed from the nearest point of Eastern Asia.

Mr. Farnsworth, recently, in *Science*, speaks of the carvings and designs of the Alaskans and Vancouver Indians as being Japanese in appearance. He also believes that at some remote period, some people

from Japan had drifted into these regions, and left there traces of the arts of the mother country. It seemed to him that some Indian traditions clearly point that way. "In looking over the collections in the Exposition at Chicago," says Mr. Farnsworth, "it occurred to me to verify these facts. In the Anthropological Building was a large collection of 'totem poles,' carved implements, and drawn figures from Alaska, also from California, Mexico, Central America and Peru, as well as from other parts of the Americas. In many places Japan was largely represented.

"There is a most striking difference between the arts of the Western coast and the interior of America. They have something of the grotesqueness of Japan, but not much other likeness. They are akin to those of ancient Mexico, and would indicate that the arts and the people of the Western coast were of like origin; that the 'totems' and other figures of Alaska and Vancouver are survivals of the arts of Central America and ancient Mexico."

Now, if a Japanese settlement was formed in Alaska, syphilis must have existed in it, and if the Alaskans and Vancouver Indians were directly connected with Central America and Mexico, the syphilis of these two countries from which we derive our first knowledge of American syphilis, had a northern origin.

Judge Wickersham of Tacoma, Washington, thus speaks in *Science*, Dec. 8, 1893, under the title, "Pottery on Puget Sound:" "That the reader may not be misled by the above headline, I hasten to say that there never was any aboriginal pottery made either on the Columbia River, Puget Sound or in the regions northward to Alaska. Baskets of such strength, firmness and texture were made, however, that the absence of pottery was not a hardship upon the Indians, for they carried water in baskets, and even boiled food in them by the use of hot rocks constantly dropped in the water. But what lesson,

if any, can the ethnologist learn from the absence of pottery on this Northwest coast?

"Let us first look at the character of the civilization existing here prior to the advent of the white man, and compare it with that of other localities—say San Francisco Bay, but a few hundred miles farther south on the same shore. The Indians of Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska made and constantly used the finest canoes in the world, capable of holding fifty or sixty men. They fearlessly pursued the whale on the Pacific Ocean far out of sight of land; and fastening their harpoons to the monster, by the use of inflated bladders they caused him to float, and after his death he was towed by a line of great canoes to the shore, where, landing the huge carcass, his captors feasted in truly Indian style. But a few hundred miles away the Indians of San Francisco Bay rode on a raft or bundle of reeds! The conclusion follows irresistibly that a different aboriginal civilization existed from the Columbia River northward to Alaska than that on San Francisco Bay. From a careful examination of the archaeological remains it seems quite certain that the lines connecting the middle type of civilization of the Puget Sound region with other American civilizations lay—one up the Columbia and across to the Ohio region, and the other by way of the Snake River, Great Salt Lake and the Pueblo region, and connecting with the Mexican country. But in each of these regions—in Ohio and Mexico—we find pottery in abundance, but none in the Puget Sound basin. This can not be on account of lack of material, for the finest potter's clay exists in great beds throughout this region on the surface, and many potteries now work it. What is the conclusion, then? It is that the high civilization of the Northwest coast did not come either from the East or South!"

"This middle type of civilization on Puget Sound made splendidly carved war canoes; the finest bas-

ket work in America; featherwork like the Aztecs; metates like those of Moqui; woven blankets equal to the Navajo; worshiped the sun like the Mexican, and made stone gods equal in carving to those of Central America; as carvers of wood they have no equals in America; they were artisans skilled in carving, weaving and painting; they built permanent homes of great posts and cedar boards, exactly like the Mongolian tribes of Asia—exactly like the Japanese; their beds were arranged on each side of the house on platforms in the true Mongolian style; their language yet preserves the identical tongue spoken by the Apache and other southern Athapascans; many pure Aztec words linger north of Puget Sound—and yet they made no pottery!

“No nation ever lost the art of pottery-making. The art never was known to the people of this northwest country; though they are cousins to the Algonquins and Aztecs, and brothers to the Apaches, yet they had not the art possessed by these people of making vessels from clay. Not a trace of the potter’s work can be found in the Columbia River or Puget Sound regions. Although these people are of kin, yet in this particular they are as distant as the poles. It follows that the Athapascans of Mexico learned the potter’s trade after they left the early home of their kinsmen on Puget Sound; it also follows that the Apache and kindred tribes were migrants from the North, and it is true that the Algonquin was not a potter until after he reached the Mississippi Valley.

“It seems to me that one certain result follows from the known facts, viz.: That the Athapascan tribes of Mexico, and possibly the Aztecs, migrated to Mexico from the Puget Sound region—for if our Athapascans came to the North from Mexico and settled in the Puget Sound basin, why did they not bring that most characteristic manufacture, pottery, with them? I take it that the conclusion must be conceded that the migration was southward, and not

by San Francisco Bay, either, but via Great Salt Lake to Mexico.

"Humboldt, Prescott and other eminent authorities place Aztlan, the ancient Aztec hiving place, in the Puget Sound region, and certainly the absence of pottery here is a strong additional fact in support of their statements. If, now, it be conceded that the hiving place of the Aztecs, Apaches and other southern Athapascans was on Puget Sound, may it not also be granted that this is some further proof of the Asiatic origin of the same tribes?"

If the conclusions of Judge Wickersham are true, they directly connect the Ohio mound-builders and the Aztecs with the northwestern settlement I have referred to above, and therefore the earliest traces of syphilis in America, which we find in the bones of Ohio and Tennessee mound-builders and of ancient Mexicans, have also an East Asiatic origin.

This becomes still more probable, if we consider the extreme of antiquity of syphilis in Eastern Asia. An autochthonous syphilis in America, which we should have to admit, if we accept Dr. Brinton's assertion that there is no connection between East Asiatics and Americans, commends itself to us as little as the autochthonous syphilis and smallpox of the Chinese.

The route from Behring Sea seems to me the only satisfactory solution.



